

Remarks on the Foreign Primary and Secondary Bibliography of the Polish Renaissance

Before I pass on to the subject proper of my presentation, I would like to make the young participants of the session – students who have arrived in such a great number – aware of what bibliographic research – perceived as a field of humanities – is. I do believe that the simplest, briefest, and most visual way of portraying it could be by means of comparison; comparison to the heavy industry of the humanities, as this research builds tools used in all the other interpretation and source research. Each well-designed academic project in our discipline – beginning with working with the source, via interpretational to synthetic tasks – must begin with reaching for such a tool, whether it is the Estreichers' fundamental Polish Bibliography, the more specialised bibliography of Polish literature *Nowy Korbut* or one as closely focused as the one I am about to discuss, that is the bibliography of foreign literary works and critical publications of foreign works, in this case concerning Polish Renaissance literature.

For the actual subject of my presentation is to make you familiar with the project conducted at the Karol Estreicher Department of Polish Bibliography. This undertaking, though still *in statu nascendi*, was initiated as a certain by-product, developing alongside the core activity of the Department: that is the preparation of successive volumes of Estreichers' Bibliography of Old Polish Written Works and re-edition of the bibliography of the 19th century. Recently, we have been adopting an increasing number of such subjects.

We embarked on the question of *Podmiotowa i przedmiotowa zagraniczna bibliografia literatury polskiego renesansu i baroku* [Foreign Primary and Secondary Bibliography of the Polish Renaissance and Baroque]. What is the idea underlying the records we are currently looking into? Though it is a very straightforward one, at the same time it may even be one that we are hardly aware of in our daily research. What I refer to here is a bibliographic listing of editions of both literary texts (in Polish and translations) in the broadest understanding of the term,

and interpretative publications prepared, roughly speaking, by foreign researchers, that is ones who could look at the writings of the Polish Renaissance from their own, non-Polish perspective. We are hosting many of them here today.

Among the experts gathered here, one need not prove how very important a component this is in the general picture of Old Polish written works. What I mean here are not only published texts and critical publications on the types of Polish-international cultural relations, but also the best works on Latin works in Poland, as a part of the common European Latin literature as well as what we sometimes find most attractive, namely, the foreign perception and opinion on the oeuvre of the Polish Renaissance.

I believe that being who we are, we do not need to hear absolute truths repeated to become convinced how important such a research tool is both in Poland and abroad, in the context of Polish culture as a part of European culture heritage. Let us rather focus on specialist questions which have been born while working on bibliography planned in this way. For the assumptions quoted above are so clear and simple only at their face value. This is why I shall now let myself touch upon a number of questions that, from the point of view of an editor of the publication being prepared, have been of most fundamental character.

First among them is the time scope of the bibliography. The final decision on this is that we are to deal with works published during slightly more than the last five decades; practically these are the works published from the Second World War almost up until today that is until the year 2005. It is like this when defining the framework of our list, we set off from an assumption that reaching foreign pre-war publications that are found in fact abroad can be a very demanding, obstacle-ridden task, while on the other hand those that were published during the five decades in question should, to a great extent, point at if not downright make use of their antecedents.

The second elementary decision concerns the method about bibliographic queries. Having analysed all the arguments available, we arrived at the decision that – faced with the available range of research methodologies and organisational assets available for the research – the one basic tool viable at the beginning of the 21st century is the Internet, while at the same time being aware of all the imperfectness that such a decision allows. (Some as basic as the lack of ability to describe the actual book). In a sense, this imperfectness could naturally be reduced by accessing the books kept in Polish library resources, even though they are but a fraction of the subject material.

In turn, there have often been no unambiguous answers to such questions as separation of sources from criticism or the exact definition of content of a specific bibliographic unit. Similarly, some ambiguity as to whether the author of a critical work 'is subject to' the criteria assumed, or whether there are grounds for diverging from the original assumptions – a step most necessary in some cases – have always been the object of careful consideration and all the doubts were looked into on a case-by-case basis, attempting to apply the highest levels of common sense. The bibliographic team frequently used a range of auxiliary sources, including intelligence from persons working directly with specific questions. Nevertheless, there exists an entire range of descriptions of publications which can only be guessed – with a high level of probability, though – to belong to the bibliography. This is possibly the reason why one should clearly say that the work, though edited under my direction, in its major part is the work of Mr Tomasz Nastulczyk (Renaissance) and Ms Olga Czemierowska (Baroque). As both the authors of the *Bibliography* and I have declared, the work will be continued and – above all – improved. For we are deeply aware that the booklet that you will presently be able to take into your hands – published in but a limited number of copies, in fact only to cater for the needs of this session's participants as a part of the *Książki bez Kantów*¹⁴ series (however the pun could be translated and referred to the content and editorial work) – though the only one available in the moment, is but the first and preliminary publication in the field.¹⁵ We dare, therefore, ask your indulgence for its flaws, errors and discrepancies, typos, misspellings, and omissions. The subject scope goes beyond that of this session as it also covers the foreign outlook on the Polish Baroque: please note the volume devoted to the Polish Enlightenment is simultaneously being worked on. For all these reasons, page one bears a note that it is the first, debut edition – in fact a working draft.

Many questions in the field of bibliography and editing still remain unsolved. For example, whether the great variety of Cyrillic transcriptions of titles and of other notations should be unified; whether we should take the liberty to rectify what seem to be evident errors in on-line records (even including misspellings) frequently made by persons who may live outside the Polish context, and who are neither profes-

¹⁴ Books un-Locke'd could do the trick.

¹⁵ *Podmiotowa i przedmiotowa zagraniczna bibliografia literatury polskiego renesansu i baroku* [Foreign Primary and Secondary Bibliography of Polish Renaissance and Baroque], ed. by W. Walecki et al. (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2005) see: www.columbinum.com.pl (accessed May 23, 2014).

sional librarians nor experts in Slavic Studies. (For the time being, the original wording and lettering of the records has been preserved, even should they contain errors). Last but not least, how to react to the corruption whose origin lies in the domain of various code page reading systems used in computers of individuals browsing through specific websites, when all the national characters (diacritics) are removed either mechanically or automatically. All such doubts as well as the justification of the decisions made – also those concerning the scope and division of the material covered by the publication – are discussed in its introduction. To minimise the corruption that simply has to crop up here, as there is no possibility for the actual ‘physical’ bibliographic description, our bibliography frequently provides addresses of relevant websites so that the user can directly enter the source used to acquire given information. They might find something we omitted in some websites, or find information which, though left out at the time of our query, has later been filled in. Nevertheless, a preliminary look at the material may lead to many general and specific conclusions as well as, I believe, directly to some inspirations for research.

First and foremost, this bibliography is collected in a single place, ordered by specific criteria, and equipped with appropriate indices. An initial quantitative inspection – a feature not most important, but definitely characteristic and documentary – shows that the most abundant is the bibliography in English, German, Italian, and – to a lesser degree – French. Going further, interest is focused, besides Kochanowski – which is obvious, on other authors, often also those writing in Latin.

The bibliography in question should, as we believe, launch major research of the manner of reception of Polish literature abroad. The listing of editions of translations of Polish Renaissance works (not only belles-lettres) shows what Europe finds important among Polish works of those days. The critical works, on the other hand, portray how varied the understanding of this literature can be: for publications on Polish Renaissance, for example, were discovered in nineteen languages.

Speaking of details, highly interesting are, for example, reports on 16th- and 17th-century Hungarian translations of Kochanowski’s works: a fact significant beyond doubt for the research of the European tradition (legacy) of the poet’s work. Going further, for example, the *Pol-ski pierwowzór melodii Janosza Thordaiego* [Polish Prototype of János Thordai’s Melodies] provides an introduction into the specific Polish-Hungarian cultural relations.

All that has been said leaves us with the conclusion that we have been given a new tool: a tool that in a way is still imperfect and prototypic, yet

already capable of bridging a certain, major gap; a tool that promises constant upgrading and updating; a tool to be available in future also in an electronic version on a data carrier, and on-line from the server of the Karol Estreicher Department of Polish Bibliography at the Jagiellonian University (www.estreicher.uj.edu.pl).

